

THE LENTHALL CONCERTS  
SEASON 2002-2003

*in conjunction with*



**“The Joy of Toy”**

**Isabel Ettanauer**

**(piano)**

**Wednesday, May 14th 2003**

**Burford School**

Supported by





**Live @ Modern Art Oxford**

Thursdays at 5.45 pm

**15 May The Joy of Toy  
Isabel Ettanauer  
(Toy Pianos)**

**22 May John Etheridge  
(guitar) &  
Chris Garrick (violin)**

All tickets are £2.00. Advance booking for tickets is recommended. Tickets are available from the gallery reception, by calling 01865 813800 (Tue-Sun 12-4pm). Under-10s accompanied by an adult get in free. The café and gallery will stay open until 7.30pm and are free to visit (see [www.moma.org.uk](http://www.moma.org.uk) for details of the exhibition programme) - don't miss out!

## BURFORD FESTIVAL

Wednesday 25th June

Burford School & Community College

### Bochmann Quartet

Haydn Quartet in F op.74 no.2

Bridge Quartet no.4

Dvorak Quartet in G op.106

Tickets £9, students £3, under-18 50p  
from the Burford Festival Box Office  
at The Burford Gallery: 01993 822305

Sponsored by Butler Sherborn  
Part of the 2003 Burford Festival

## Programme

### Suite for Toy Piano

*John Cage*

Probably the first classical piece ever written for toy piano is John Cage's Suite for Toy Piano which he wrote for Merce Cunningham's dance suite Diversion. The piece was premiered by the composer himself at the legendary Black Mountain College in North Carolina in August 1948. It consists of five short movements and uses only nine consecutive white notes. The charming composition is a wonderful example of Cage's humour. He seems to ignore the limited resources of a toy piano and writes extreme dynamics from *ppp* to *sfz* which makes the performer try his best to enable differences even if they turn out to be subtle.

John Cage (1912-1992) was one of the most important composers in the 20th century. He was an inventor of genius" as Arnold Schoenberg called him. It would be impossible to calculate the catalytic effect and ramifications that John Cage's work has had on 20th-century music and art, for it is clear that the musical developments of our time cannot be understood without taking into account his music and ideas.

### Mirabella - a Tarantella for Toy Piano

*Stephen Montague*

Stephen Montague writes about "Mirabella": "In 1995 Margaret Leng Tan asked me to write a new work for her European tour of toy piano pieces. I was intrigued by the idea of writing for this unusual instrument and a little tarantella soon developed. The tarantella is an Italian folk dance which legend claims cures the poisonous bite of the tarantula. It begins tempo moderato in 6/8 and the pace gradually quickens until it runs out of breath, collapsing at the end."

Stephen Montague (b. 1943) studied at Florida State and Ohio State Universities and won a Fulbright Fellowship to work in Warsaw (1972-74). Since 1975 he has worked as a freelance composer based in London but tours world-wide. Amongst his many activities are collaborations with the pianist Philip Mead (piano & electronics duo), Singcircle, and with sculptor Maurice Agis (multi channel sound environments for his giant inflatable sculptures). His works have been performed by many leading ensembles including the London Symphony Orchestra, featured on the BBC Proms and numerous other international festivals and recorded on CD (ASV, Continuum, Point Records, etc.)

### The Memory of Roses for toy piano and grand piano

*Louis Andriessen*

*The Memory of Roses*, a performance for Tomoko Mukaiyama, is part of a collection of short pieces by Louis Andriessen which he selected together with his friend and ex-pupil Ron Ford for a CD production (*Marginalia*). They chose twenty-three special occasion pieces (like for example musical Birthday cards for friends) written over a period of 30 years for a variety of

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## *Thomas and Sally*

*by Thomas Arne*



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"An accomplished, sophisticated English comic opera of the 1760s—not a whit inferior to Haydn's compositions at the same time" *Hugh Vickers, Oxford Times*

instruments. The CD was recorded on two pleasant days in July 1993. Andriessen reports: "Friends and musicians dropped in and by, they were all served with coffee and wine and this all in the wonderfully inspiring location of the Waalse Kerk in Amsterdam." The last piece of the collection has the same name as the collection itself, *The Memory of Roses*. Originally the first six minutes were inaudible: Tomoko Mukaiyama was caressing, very slowly, the petals of a bouquet of red flowers. After a minute of immobility she moved over to the piano and finally played a piece for piano and toy piano.

Louis Andriessen was born in Utrecht in 1939 into a musical family: his father Hendrik, and his brother Jurriaan were established composers at their own right. Today he is the greatest living Dutch composer. From a background of jazz and avant-garde composition, Andriessen has evolved a style employing elemental harmonic, melodic and rhythmic materials, heard in totally distinctive instrumentation.

### **The Animist Child for toy piano/voice**

**Jerome Kitzke**

*The Animist Child* is a stomp on the earth for the beginning of life; a baby born who instinctively embraces the soul inherent in all things. Written for Wendy Chambers and first performed by her in 1994 in New York City, the piece has been subsequently performed many times in Europe and the United States by Ms. Chambers, Margaret Leng Tan, Kathleen Supové, Anthony de Mare, Tom Linker, Isabel Ettenauer, and the composer. *The Animist Child* is dedicated to Bix Karl Windbiel, born June 30, 1994.

Jerome Kitzke (b. 1955) lives in New York City but grew up along the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan in Milwaukee. Since his first work in 1970, he has thought himself to be as much a storyteller as he is a composer. Kitzke's music celebrates American Vitality in its purest forms. It thrives on the spirit of driving jazz, plains Indian song, and Beat Generation poetry, where freedom and ritual converge. It is direct, dramatic, and visceral; always with an ear to the sacred ground. Kitzke composes for and performs with his group The Mad Coyote. His music has been performed by various soloists and ensembles in North and South American, Europe, Asia and Australia.

### **Cover Versions for four toy pianos**

**Geff Hannan**

The composer writes on *Cover Versions*: "The title alludes to the fact that my work in recent years has borrowed material from other people's music. In *Cover Versions* fragments from Schubert and Schoenberg - both Austrian, like Isabel Ettenauer for whom the piece was written in 2002 - make up the texture. The title is apt too in that sometimes these fragments are indeed 'covered' by other things, and that the toy piano might be considered a 'cover version' of its adult cousin."

Geff Hannan (b. 1972) studied privately with Michael Finnissy before reading Music at Manchester University where he graduated in 1993. He has attended a number of composition classes with composers such as Fernyough and Lachenmann. In 1998 he was joint-winner of the Gaudeamus International Composition Prize. His music has been played by Ensemble Contrechamps, Ensemble Accroche Note, Tegenwind, the Nieuw Ensemble,

Ixion, Stephen Gutman and the London Sinfonietta. He has been performed at the major British festivals and been featured on French and Dutch radio as well as BBC Radio 3's 'Hear and Now', 'Sounding the Century' and 'Music Matters' series.

### **La Maison de Fred for speaking, singing and whistling toy pianist**

**Joe Cutler**

Joe Cutler comments on *La Maison de Fred*: "I wanted to use the toy piano in conjunction with a narrated story so I asked my friend, the writer Peter Burt if he would like to provide a short text. My only guideline was that it should have a twist in its tail and that the first performance would be in Vienna (although it was now Amsterdam!)." *La Maison de Fred* was written for Isabel Ettenauer to be premiered at the International Gaudeamus Music Week 2001. Since then it has received many performances, including a series of 12 evenings at the Jeunesse Festival in Vienna, in September/October of 2002.

Joe Cutler was born in London in 1968 and studied at the Universities of Huddersfield and Durham and at the Chopin Academy, Warsaw, on a Polish Government Scholarship. Performers of his work have included London Sinfonietta, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Ensemble de Ereprijs, Harry Sparnaay and Annelie de Man, Tomoko Mukaiyama and Nosferatu (a group he co-founded in 2000). He was awarded 2nd prize in the 2000 Toru Takemitsu Composition Award and received a Special Mention at the 1997 Gaudeamus International Music Week. Joe also collaborates with dance, film and theatre and last year wrote the music for the National Theatre's award-winning production of Charlotte Jones's new play *Humble Boy*. He teaches composition at Birmingham Conservatoire and forthcoming works include a BBC commission for the combined forces of Icebreaker and Orkest de Volharding.

### **Schroeder's Revenge for toy piano**

**Rob Smith**

Schroeder, tired of doing yet another performance of the Moonlight Sonata, rebels and takes off in a flurry of rhythmic activity. However, the Moonlight Sonata keeps slipping back in... maybe this is Beethoven's Revenge? *Schroeder's Revenge* was written at the beginning of 2001 for Isabel Ettenauer and since then was performed by her at numerous concerts and festivals in Europe.

Rob Smith (b. 1968) is Assistant Professor of Music Composition and director of the AURA contemporary Ensemble at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. His music has received numerous awards and is frequently performed throughout the United States and abroad. In 1997, as the recipient of a Fulbright Grant, Rob Smith studied with Peter Sculthorpe at the University of Sydney in Australia.

## ISABEL ETTENAUER

Austrian born Isabel Ettenauer is an outstanding young performer who frequently develops unusual projects. Both as a virtuoso pianist dedicated to contemporary music and with her most recent project THE JOY OF TOY [new music for toy piano] she has performed at a number of major festivals and concert series in Europe and the USA, as for example the International Gaudeamus Music Days (Amsterdam), Jeunesse Festival (Vienna), Making New Waves (Budapest), Crosslinx Festival (Utrecht, Enschede). Following her London toy piano debut at the Warehouse in December 2002 Isabel is now touring England and Wales as part of the BMIC Cutting Edge Tour giving concerts at the Leamington Festival, the Vale of Glamorgan Festival, in Cambridge at Kettle's Yard and at Modern Art Oxford. She frequently collaborates with composers from all over the world. In September/October she will be a performer in residence at the Voix Nouvelles composition course in Royaumont, France and will also work on a radio piece with composer David Sawer to be broadcast on BBC3 in December. Since the beginning of her project THE JOY OF TOY there has been an immense interest by all media, and Isabel's toy piano performances were broadcast by radio and TV stations in Austria (ORF), Britain (BBC 3 and BBC Scotland), Hungary (Duna TV and RTL Klub) and the Netherlands (VPRO and NCRV).



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... The toy piano, as it is known today, was invented in Philadelphia in 1872 by a German immigrant named Albert Schoenhut, who replaced the glass sounding-pieces of children's pianos with metal bars struck by wooden mallets.

Toy pianos were marketed as educational tools for families who could not afford a full-sized instrument; by 1935, Schoenhut's company had a catalogue of more than 40 different toy pianos costing from 40 cents to \$25. This strange bastard cousin of glockenspiel and piano remained exclusively a children's affair until 1948, when that master of unexpected means, John Cage, wrote his charmingly whimsical *Suite for Toy Piano*, a piece in five movements that uses only the white notes of a single octave. In the 1990s, the small canon of toy-piano music began to be extended and popularised by performer Margaret Leng Tan, a devotee of Cage's work whose impressive repertoire of instruments included not only pianos and toy pianos but a teapot, a soy-sauce dish, a toy accordion and a row of carefully tuned tuna-fish cans. . . .

Do not commit the grave solecism of assuming that all toy pianos are alike. "Each one has a different sound," Ettenauer says. "I have a Chinese toy piano that is fabulously warm compared to the Schoenhut." And so one must acquire a collection. "Now I have 12 toy pianos," she confesses. "I got addicted. When I see a toy piano, I have to have it."

"Pianos for gnomes," chuckles composer Joe Cutler, at the memory of Ettenauer visiting him with all her toy pianos. She will be playing his piece, *La Maison de Fred*, at her concert. "It's quite a challenge, because you have such a limitation of range, and you can't sustain anything," Cutler says of composing for the instrument. "I was quite keen to do something that wasn't just playing piano; the performer has to perform theatrically. I got used to it with text and a whistling voice." *La Maison de Fred* is about a "mad old lady" reminiscing over her youth in Vienna, "and it integrates Hansel and Gretel as well", says Cutler.

... Ettenauer also speaks highly of another work she is currently rehearsing, Geoff Hannan's *Cover Versions*. Toy-piano music can be serious and complex, she insists, and *Cover Versions* in particular is "very difficult", especially since it uses four toy pianos at the same time: a Schoenhut chromatic concert grand, and three other diatonic pianos - essentially, they have only white notes, and they are all in different keys. Hannan explains the concept behind his piece: "The toy piano is a cover version of a real piano," he argues. "And what I've done as a composer over the past few years is take other people's music and make 'samples' of it to make it my own. So for *Cover Versions*, I took material from Schubert and Schoenberg - very short samples, one or two seconds long, a chord or something. Occasionally there will be longer quotations, but the toy pianos filter out the notes they can't play."

What does Hannan consider the attraction of the toy piano? "It has a certain charm and ridiculousness," he says, "an innocence, a sense of fun. Also its irregularities and inconsistencies are interesting - it's slightly out of tune. The top half and the bottom half of the range are two different harmonic regions. In the bottom half you can hardly hear the fundamental - you tend to hear a fifth up. So I got Isabel to play every note of all her pianos into a Minidisc recorder, and then I put them all into my computer. So at one stage I had a virtual toy piano in order to be able to compose the piece."

Toy-piano technique differs from that of the grown-up instrument, Ettenauer confirms. "There are no strings, just metal bars, and no dampers or pedals," she explains. "Once you have played the note, you can't do anything any more. It doesn't matter if I stay on the key or leave." And while her Schoenhut concert grand boasts full-width keys, other toy pianos are more fiddly: "I sometimes turn my fingers sideways so as not to hit two keys at the same time." But the most beguiling aspect of the toy piano remains that which is hardest to capture in words - its sound. Its ghostly chiming can put one in mind of Tubular Bells, as used on the soundtrack to *The Exorcist*: it is a childlike but also otherworldly and faintly unsettling timbre. Cutler suggests that it sounds "like a weird music box", but for Ettenauer, its charm remains strictly unique. "People ask me, 'Is it like a xylophone? Is it like a celeste?'," she laughs. "I think it sounds like a toy piano."

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